



State of Illinois
Pat Quinn, Governor

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Doug Scott, Director

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



388678

Fact Sheet #2

July 2010

Investigation at Markham Illegal Dumping Site

Markham, Cook County, Illinois

Background

The dump site in/near Markham in Cook County is a 12-acre-plus property bounded by 159th Street on the north, Dixie Highway on the east, the Calumet-Union Drainage Canal on the south, and Western Avenue on the west (see map on page 4). Dumping activities have apparently been going on at the site for many years. Illinois EPA found discarded mobile homes, automobile parts, boats, tires, drums and totes of unknown liquids and solids (and some spilled onto the ground), unidentified gas cylinders, swimming pool chemicals and various construction and demolition debris.

Message to area residents: please do not let children play at this site. Physical hazards as well as the potential for disease-carrying mosquitoes present a danger to trespassers.

Mosquito species identified at the site are capable of carrying a type of encephalitis, which affects children as well as adults, and the West Nile Virus, which primarily affects older citizens.

What cleanup actions have occurred at the site?

Illinois EPA is in the process of completing removal of tires and other debris at the site. 503 truckloads (9000 tons) of various solid waste materials dumped at the site were hauled away to be properly disposed at a landfill. In addition, 98 truckloads of tires (equivalent to 26,130 passenger tires) were removed from the site for beneficial reuse and recycling. To date, the total cost of the removal action by the state is more than \$600,000.

What chemical contaminants still exist at the dump site?

*pH is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a solution, numerically equal to 7 for neutral solutions, increasing with increasing alkalinity and decreasing with increasing acidity.

Illinois EPA soil sampling results revealed some heavy metals at levels greater than background. Additionally, one of four samples revealed elevated levels of cancer-causing chemicals from the family of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are commonly found in products made from fossil fuels, such as coal-tar pitch and asphalt, and can be released into the air during incomplete burning of fossil fuels and garbage. Site trespassers may be exposed to these chemicals by inhaling airborne dusts or otherwise contacting contamination at the site.

Laboratory analyses from samples collected by U.S. EPA in May reveal the presence of some metals, including lead. Totes of oil were tested, and the contents are not flammable. Samples of insulating material were tested for asbestos, and the results were negative. Several bags and drums of swimming pool chemicals revealed chlorine, ammonia and high pH levels*, which can be corrosive. Standing water near the pool chemicals also contained ammonia and chlorine and higher-than-normal pH levels. It is expected that most of the surface contamination in the spilled chemicals area will be removed when U.S. EPA removes the chemical totes.

Were any site-related contaminants found in groundwater samples from private wells?

other containers and visible residue in the fall of 2010.

No. Laboratory results from the private well tests in April revealed groundwater contamination from naturally-occurring metals and minerals only, which do not appear to be site-related.

The wells tested are not in the direction of groundwater flow from the site, which is to the south. Mainly industrial businesses are located in this direction, and they are served by a community water supply.

Illinois EPA is interested in locating the private wells closest to the site. If you have a well within a few blocks of the site and have not previously informed the Agency, please contact Charlene Thigpen at 847/294-4122.

What are the next steps to make the site safer?

The Illinois Office of the Attorney General (IOAG) signed an Agreed Interim Order with the City of Markham on June 22, 2010. Pursuant to the order, the City is to provide 24-hour police surveillance of the site so that no more waste will be deposited there. The City will maintain barriers to restrict access and has provided signs at locations around the perimeter of the site to deter individuals from entering the site.

Illinois EPA purchased a mosquito treatment product and arranged for the South Cook County Mosquito Abatement District to apply it to reduce the number of mosquito larvae. The treatment, which was conducted on May 18, will be effective for three to four months.

Will the contamination be cleaned up?

Illinois EPA has removed most of the debris and tires at this point. U.S. EPA intends to conduct a removal of all suspect chemical containers and spilled chemicals at the site. That work is expected to begin in the fall of 2010.

Additionally, per the Agreed Interim Order, the City of Markham will discuss further clean-up activities for the dump site with the State.

What steps are being taken to make sure dumping does not resume at this location?

Vigilance by local government and private citizens is the best way to insure that more illegal dumping does not occur at this location. Citizens should report illegal dumping to local government and Illinois EPA Regional Office (see contact information below).

The Agreed Interim Order requires that Markham install and maintain video cameras at the site to catch fly dumpers in action. Live feed will be monitored by the police department 24 hours a day. The City is also required to continue to restrict access to the site to deter additional dumping and to maintain barriers and warning signs around the site.

Illinois EPA intends to pursue legal action against any viable party involved in this matter. If any citizen has information about who is responsible for illegal dumping activities at this site, please contact Charlene Thigpen (see below).

**For more information,
you may contact:**

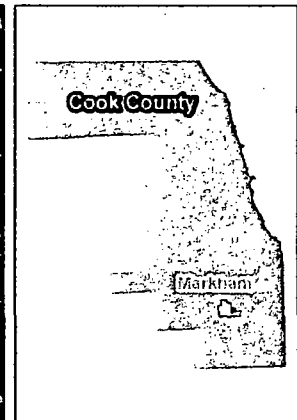
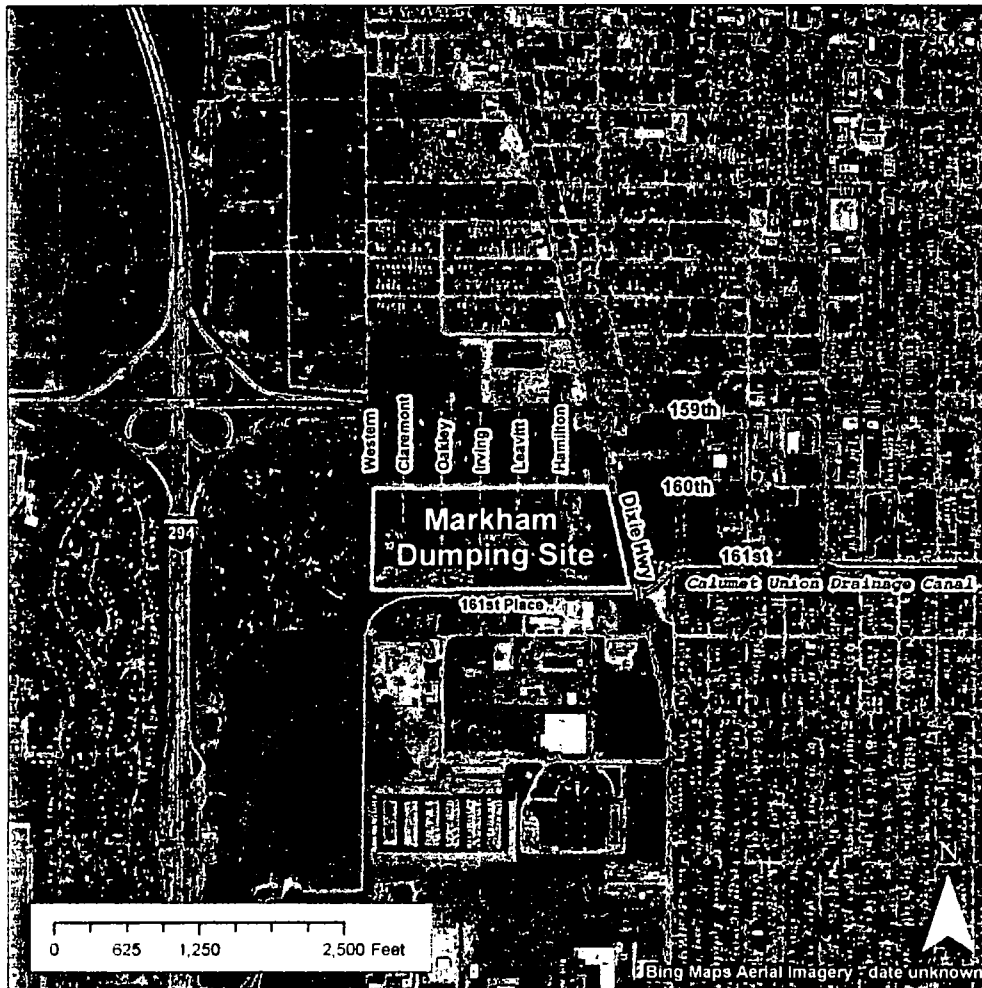
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Site-related information is posted on Illinois EPA's website at
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/> (for site photos);
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/community-relations/fact-sheets.html> (for fact sheets); or
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/news-releases/> (for news releases).

**Map of the boundaries of the investigation "site."
Dumping has occurred at various places within the site.**



- Markham Dumping Site
- Calumet Union drain North

**Site extends from
Western Avenue
to Dixie Highway
and
160th to 161st Place
(Calumet Union
Drainage Canal)**



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